United Nations S/PV.4630 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4630th meeting

Tuesday, 22 October 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou	(Cameroon)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mrs. Arce de Jeannet
	Norway	Mr. Sjøberg
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lepliskiy
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security

Letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/1179).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

02-65456 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The President (spoke in French): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Burundi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi) (spoke in French): The delegation of Burundi is gratified and proud to see you, Sir, presiding over the Council today. Cameroon is a fraternal country committed to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations and dedicated to the ideals of peace and security in Central Africa.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Bulgaria on the leadership demonstrated during its presidency of the Council last month.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made this morning by Minister Rodolphe Adada, of the Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

Central Africa needs peace and security. The Security Council, more than any other body in the United Nations system, is witness to that fact, since it regularly takes up the issue of the conflicts confronting almost all the countries of the subregion.

The Secretary-General, responding to the wishes of the States members of ECCAS and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/37 B, established, on 28 May 1992, the United Nations Advisory Committee on Central Africa Security Questions. This is additional to the Offices of the representatives of the Secretary-General in our countries, to the United Nations Development Programme and other programmes and agencies of the United Nations system and to the special envoys and special representatives of the Secretary-General. The main goal of the Advisory Committee is to promote peace, security and development in Central Africa through confidence-building measures and restrictions on weapons.

That Committee has proved invaluable for our countries, particularly because it provides a focal point for meetings and discussions among authorities and experts from the subregion aimed at finding ways and means to stabilize our States through cooperation, not just in the area of peace and security, but also with regard to human rights, democratization and good governance.

Without the services of the Secretariat and the variety of support that the Advisory Committee has made available to Member States, it would not have been possible to participate in the seminars and conferences in pursuit of the goals of ECCAS as outlined by the Government of the Republic of Cameroon on behalf of ECCAS at the forty-first session of the General Assembly.

I do not want to review the conclusions of the various conferences and seminars organized since the establishment of the Advisory Committee, but I would like to refer to the major decisions adopted under its auspices, the effective implementation of which presents a challenge to our subregion, if we truly want to build and restore peace in Central Africa.

These include the adoption and signing in 1996 of the Non-Aggression Pact between the nine countries of ECCAS; the creation of the Central African early-warning system; the establishment, on 25 February 1999 in Yaoundé, of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, for which an agreement was signed at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on 25 June 2000, by the heads of State or Government of ECCAS; the creation of a subregional human rights and democracy centre in Central Africa; and the establishment of a subregional parliament in Central Africa.

The legal instruments of the United Nations system, as well as the relevant bodies of ECCAS and the outcomes of various conferences and seminars, should now enable us to obtain tangible results on the ground.

For my delegation, the areas of concern that require special attention from our States and support from the United Nations at a time when encouraging peace processes are under way in various countries confronted by conflict in Central Africa can be summarized under three headings: combating the traffic in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants; and the restoration of confidence among the countries of the subregion.

The question of the fight against the trade in small arms in Central Africa has been treated in two subregional seminars: the high-level subregional seminar on the examination and implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict

and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, held in Yaoundé from 19 to 21 July 1999, and the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms in Central Africa, held in N'Djamena from 25 to 27 October 1999. In its programme of work for the period 2002 to 2006, the Standing Advisory Committee is planning a seminar on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July 2001, and a workshop on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the instrument for reporting military expenditures. Burundi is ready to make its contribution during that seminar.

The arms circulating in our region — due to entire roving armies, rebellions and the presence of uncontrolled armed groups, including sometimes in the refugee camps — contribute to fuelling conflicts and to subjecting the civilian population to indiscriminate acts of terrorism and economic and social destabilization in the countryside. Likewise, the destruction caused by anti-personnel mines in Central Africa is a constant source of concern. Our countries must accede to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Secondly, with respect to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, all peace processes under way in the countries of Central Africa include a DDR programme, which is one of the most sensitive components of such processes. Whether it be in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Rwanda or Chad, the transition from armed confrontation to peace-building requires great clear-mindedness and a leadership that is truly committed to peace and which possesses a vision for the future of our States and our peoples. Political and technical support from the Security Council and from the entire international community is crucial at this stage. The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where tens of thousands of members of armed groups and militias are contending with tens of thousands of State troops, will put this to the test. Fortunately, everything indicates that the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo currently under way will lead to the neutralization of those armed groups in conformity with the provisions of the Lusaka Agreement.

To that end, I welcome the existence of the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme, which the World Bank and the European Union plan to fund to the amount of $500 million between 2002 and 2006 for the benefit of Central Africa. I take this occasion to welcome the presence among us of Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, and to welcome through him the very positive role played by the World Bank in our subregion, and in Burundi in particular, where Mr. Mbi is considered a messenger of peace, alongside the mediators working for peace in Burundi.

Thirdly, with respect to the restoration of confidence among countries of the subregion, if I can make a kind of public confession, I would say that the countries of Central Africa have marginalized themselves through their mutual distrust and through the slowness of certain political leaders to realize that the people deserve respect. As a result of the lack of respect for the citizens, the region has witnessed one of the worst genocides of the century and the cruellest dictators of the history of the African continent.

Our States have to change with the times. The process of normalization under way in the subregion should result in domestic reconciliation within each country, peace at the borders, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes, and the integrated development of our economies, including the sound and transparent use of the enormous natural resources of Central Africa, for the well-being of our peoples. That is why the Government of Burundi believes that perhaps it is time to begin the necessary consultations in preparation for an international conference on peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

We ask the United Nations to help in the efforts to reinvigorate and stabilize the political, social and economic life of this part of Africa by implementing an effective system of preventive diplomacy and an early warning mechanism so that the tragedies that have marked our subregion will not be repeated. Perhaps we should finally think about establishing a regional observatory against genocide in Central Africa.

All these ideas will be fleshed out once the guns have fallen silent, once there is implementation of the decisions of the conferences and summits within the framework of the Standing Advisory Committee and

the Economic Community of Central African States, and once the domestic peace and reconciliation agreements, the bilateral agreements for the normalization of diplomatic relations and the subregional agreements for economic cooperation and reintegration are revitalized, reworked, implemented and truly respected by all the signatories, for the benefit of our peoples and our States.

To better understand the prevailing climate in the regions, we encourage visits like those made by the Security Council to the Great Lakes region in May 2001 and May 2002.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Chad. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Laotegguelnodji (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration is, for scheduling reasons, unable to take part in this open debate on Central Africa. Nonetheless, he offers his apologies and has entrusted me with presenting the following message to the Council.

> "On behalf of my Government and in my own name, I wish to congratulate the President of the Security Council on assuming the presidency of the Council and for his praiseworthy initiative of organizing a public Council debate on Central Africa.
>
> "As a child of the Central African subregion, Mr. President, you know better than anyone all the problems of security, peace and development that beset Central Africa, which is, nonetheless, known as one of Africa's richest subregions in terms of natural wealth, resources and development potential of all kinds.
>
> "Your initiative of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the area of the maintenance of peace and security is a matter of pride to the whole of Africa, particularly the States within the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).
>
> "Mr. President, allow me to draw your attention and that of your colleagues members of the Security Council to the situation prevailing between two neighbouring and fraternal countries, the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic. I wish to point out that this situation is developing in the right direction towards peace and security.
>
> "This fortunate development is chiefly a dividend of the recent Summit of Heads of State of ECCAS, held on 2 October 2002 in Libreville, Gabon.
>
> "The Government of Chad, for its part, has begun to implement the commitments undertaken at that Summit. Thus, it has engaged in contacts with friendly countries, and in one case the talks have reached a very advanced stage, with a view to finding a solution to the exile of Mr. Bozize, who is currently seeking refuge in Chad.
>
> "Other commitments undertaken in Libreville, including on the security and military levels, will be respected and implemented, in cooperation with the Central African Republic, with respect to the commitments involving bilateral cooperation.
>
> "I wish to take this opportunity of the public debate to pay a warm tribute to the senior Gabonese authorities and to the Government and people of Gabon for having tirelessly contributed to bringing peace to the border between Chad and the Central African Republic. I will just cite two recent examples. Recently we saw the work of the verification commission evaluating the situation prevailing on the northern Chad-Central African border, which Gabon sponsored until its conclusion. And now we see the Summit of Heads of State devoted to the same problem, hosted by Gabon.
>
> "I wish also to thank the authorities of the countries of the subregion and of Mali, who agreed to release military contingents to be part of a force of 300 to 350 personnel, as decided at the Libreville Summit.
>
> "Peace will be complete and security guaranteed on the borders of these two countries only if all the 'Libreville Summit commitments' become reality. Mr. President, this is why I appeal to your institution, the Security Council, and to the international community to assist the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic to be able to draw on the necessary

means to implement the 'Libreville commitments'.

"Granted, much has already been done, and continues to be done, by the United Nations to curb conflicts and build peace and security in the Central African region. But, as long as situations persist that imperil peace and security in the subregion, the States concerned will continue to turn towards you, Mr. President, and your institution, the Security Council, for assistance in finding lasting solutions capable of bringing hope to the peoples of Central Africa."

Mr. President, I wish to thank you for having given me permission to deliver this message. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to add that I fully associate myself with the statement made by Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Congo, who spoke on behalf of our Community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Amadou Kébé, Permanent Observer of the African Union. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kébé (*spoke in French*): Allow me, Sir, to convey the thanks of His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Interim Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, for the invitation you kindly addressed to him to participate in this open debate. He sincerely regrets that he was unable to come to New York because of prior commitments. That is why he asked me to represent him during these deliberations.

Sir, I should like to convey to you, and through you to your country, Cameroon, heartfelt congratulations on the your assumption of the Council's presidency for the month of October.

The African Union welcomes this debate, and we fully support it, because the Union believes that it is the first step in a series of meetings to come between the Security Council and the subregional organizations on matters of peace and security. This debate coincides directly with the objectives of the Working Group on Africa established by the Council under the chairmanship of Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul.

This debate is timely, since the Central African subregion, which has spared no effort to defuse tensions and restore normal relations among its members, has decided to deploy an International Observation Force (FIO) in the Central African Republic, responsible for, inter alia, security along the common border between Chad and the Central African Republic. The adoption on 18 October of the presidential statement contained in document S/PRST/2002/28, in which the Security Council said that it supported the deployment of an International Observation Force, is eloquent testimony to what the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations can do together in the area of the conflict prevention, management and settlement.

What we think is crucial in this partnership is the principle of shared responsibility — or sharing the burden — in peacekeeping operations. The United Nations should never give the impression that it is abandoning its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. This principle is today more relevant than ever before in Central Africa. Within this partnership, we need to see to what extent the Council can take over from the regional and subregional mechanisms as soon and as effectively as possible, once the financial and logistic limits of these operations do not allow those mechanisms to complete the peacekeeping operations that they initiated.

The increasingly resolute commitment of the African heads of State to make more effective and more operational the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in the African continent is illustrated in the adoption by the first regular session of the conference of the Union, held in Durban, South Africa, of the protocol establishing the African Union's Peace and Security Council. This protocol defines the subregional mechanisms for conflict management as being an integral part of the continental mechanism, which has the primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. The goal of the structural relationship between the continental mechanism and the subregional mechanisms is, first of all, to harmonize and coordinate the activities of the subregional mechanisms with regard to peace, security and stability, and secondly, to ensure a real partnership between the subregional mechanisms and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union within the framework of the latter's mandate.

Central Africa has been ravaged for decades by conflicts of every sort. That chronic instability has always compromised efforts aimed at economic and social development, despite the region's enormous

potential. Mindful of the fact that peace and political stability are an essential requirement for development, Central Africa has established several regional cooperation frameworks and mechanisms for peace, security, economic integration and development.

In order to support those efforts and support the leaders of Central Africa in their quest for stability and development, the African Union — which has always worked in close cooperation with the subregional organizations and with the representatives of the United Nations on the ground — proposes the following: first, to ensure the swift and effective implementation of all resolutions related to the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi; secondly, to develop a coordinated and coherent United Nations policy in Central Africa that would involve the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflicts, and the international financial institutions in the rebuilding of the subregion's countries; thirdly, to strengthen cooperation among all organizations in the subregion — the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries; fourthly, to make the Council for Peace and Security established for ECCAS operational and establish a working relationship between it and the various United Nations departments and agencies; and fifthly, to find, with the assistance of the international community, a swift regional solution to the problem of refugees and displaced persons in the subregion.

The African Union favours any new initiative in this forum that might be undertaken with its member States to support and strengthen their tireless efforts for decades to restore peace and stability to their region and to launch economic and social development projects.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Permanent Observer of the African Union for the kind words he addressed to me.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nelson Cosme, Deputy Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States.

Mr. Cosme (*spoke in French*): I wish to associate myself with the statement made earlier by Mr. Rodolphe Adada, President of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and with all the statements made by the Ministers of our subregion.

The convening of an open meeting by the Security Council on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central Africa region in the maintenance of peace and security attests once again to the willingness of the entire international community to help our Central African subregion to break out of the vicious circle of incessant conflict that seriously undermines any initiative aimed at sustainable development.

I should, therefore, like to tell you, Sir, that we are gratified at seeing you presiding over the Council. It is a matter of pride, not only for your country, Cameroon, but also for our whole subregion of Central Africa, and we rejoice in it. We are particularly pleased because among the five new non-permanent members of the Council, there is another country of our community, Angola. We congratulate that country, along with Germany, Chile, Spain and Pakistan.

Furthermore, our Community welcomes the ruling issued by the International Court of Justice at The Hague in the Bakassi Peninsula case, involving Cameroon and Nigeria. That ruling, accepted by both parties, symbolizes once again the international community's ability to eliminate, through peaceful means, the causes of tension in that part of our continent. In other words, peace is gradually being established in Africa for the benefit of its peoples and through peaceful means.

The ECCAS area, known for its potential, stretches across 11 countries of Central Africa, is a troubled region, as we have heard. Some of its States have known several decades of conflict. I could cite, for example, the case of Angola. That is one of the reasons why our Community is concerned with peace and security and with post-conflict issues.

Our subregion's strategic position makes it a nexus between Northern and Southern Africa, on the one hand, and between Western and Eastern Africa, on the other. In other words, the peace and security of our subregion affect the stability of all the other subregions, and thus of the entire continent. It was in that context that our heads of State or Government, supported by the United Nations system, decided to give first priority to the political and security

dimensions, as a prelude to the subregion's development.

It was on 28 November 1986 that, confronted with the dual need of working towards establishing an atmosphere of peace, cooperation and prosperity, on the one hand, and of following up and strengthening the multifaceted efforts of the United Nations in Central Africa, on the other hand, the heads of State or Government of ECCAS presented the Organization with a programme aimed at defining and implementing a number of measures aimed at strengthening trust, security and development in our subregion. Similarly, from 15 to 19 November 1988, the first conference devoted to the issues of security, development and confidence-building among ECCAS States was held at Lomé under the auspices of the United Nations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recall that it was in that framework that, on 28 May 1992, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/37 B, of 6 December 1991, and on the request of ECCAS members, the Secretary-General established the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. In the same vein, in September 1993 our heads of State or Government unanimously adopted at Libreville the non-aggression pact that was signed on 8 July 1996 by nine of the 11 countries that make up ECCAS. That was followed by a protocol pertaining to the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa and a Mutual Assistance Pact, which was signed by our heads of State at Malabo on 24 February 2000.

The Council for Peace and Security (COPAX) is the key element of our peace and security architecture in Central Africa. The Council is a prevention mechanism designed to maintain and build peace and security at the regional level. COPAX is equipped with three organs; to put them into operation we particularly need the international community's support. The first is the Defence and Security Commission, which is responsible for reviewing all administrative, technical and logistical issues involved in maintaining peace in Central Africa and for evaluating the attendant needs.

In that connection, I wish to say that our chiefs of staff are currently preparing a joint military exercise, which has been dubbed "Biyongho 2003" and which is to take place in Gabon in June of that year. In that regard, an initial planning conference took place in Franceville and Libreville from 7 to 12 October 2002. The main planning process is scheduled to take place in February and April 2003. Once again, in this regard we shall count on the support of the Security Council to ensure the success of the exercise, given that it represents a first step towards the establishment of the Central African Multinational Force.

That force constitutes the second organ of COPAX. It will be made up of contingents from national armies, police and gendarmerie personnel and civilian units from ECCAS member States. The role of the force will be to carry out peace, security and humanitarian assistance missions. Regular training for these ECCAS stand-by forces will ensure that they are adequately prepared for any mission entrusted to them and that they can be deployed quickly whenever needed. It is in that context that we view the assistance from the World Bank and the European Union to be provided under the Multicountry Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP). We also believe that the training process will serve to promote effective efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Finally, the third organ is the Central African Early Warning System, which is a monitoring mechanism aimed at preventing crises and conflicts in our subregion. It is entrusted with collecting and analysing information regarding all events in the subregion in order to sound warnings. In order to carry out its work, the System has been given a central structure with its headquarters at Libreville, which has been made available free of charge by the Republic of Gabon. In that connection, ECCAS would again like to express its gratitude to the Minister for Defence of Gabon, who is present here, as well as to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of that country, for all their hard work. In addition, assistance in strengthening the mechanism's institutions has just been approved by the European Development Fund in the context of regional cooperation between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

In addition to those instruments, the heads of State or Government of ECCAS have equipped our central architecture for peace and security in Central Africa with various other tools. These include a Mutual Assistance Pact whereby States undertake to provide mutual assistance to defend one another against any threat of aggression or actual armed aggression; the Network of Central African Parliamentarians, which is the forerunner of a subregional parliament; and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy

in Central Africa, which is headquartered in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

In order to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States, the General Assembly granted observer status to ECCAS in its resolution 55/161, of 12 December 2000, one month after the terms of cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS had been set out in resolution 55/22, of 10 November 2000. As a result, ECCAS is associated with all the debates taking place at, and decisions emanating from, the United Nations.

ECCAS is also aware of the numerous United Nations and subregional initiatives which have greatly contributed to the gradual improvement our subregion has witnessed in the area of peace and security. In that regard, ECCAS welcomes the positive developments in the situation in Angola, in particular the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding addendum to the Lusaka Protocol regarding a cessation of hostilities and the settlement of pending military issues. These new provisions, which have made it possible for all of the country's political actors to participate in the management of State affairs, are hopeful signs for the strengthening of national reconciliation and reconstruction in Angola. With respect to Burundi, ECCAS hopes that the round of negotiations under way in Dar es Salaam between the Government of Burundi and the last two rebel movements will be the last one and that it will result in the signing of a ceasefire so that at last the people of Burundi can enjoy the peace of which they have been deprived for almost a decade.

The Community welcomes the significant progress made between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and encourages them to respect their commitment and to normalize their relations in order to restore mutual trust to enable their two peoples once again to experience the joys of a peaceful life.

ECCAS also rejoices at observing the overall improvement in peace and security issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the holding of an inclusive national dialogue. This is attested to by the gradual return of refugees and displaced persons, the continued collection of weaponry, demobilization, the reintegration of former military personnel and the holding of peaceful general elections that led to the establishment of new republican institutions.

ECCAS also commends the Central African Republic and Chad and encourages them to continue to strive to find a negotiated solution in order to settle the dispute between them by giving effect to the recommendations of the meeting held in Libreville on 2 October under the mediation of President Bongo.

Nonetheless, ECCAS is still concerned at the upsurge of violence in the conflict between the Chadian Government and the Movement for Democracy and Justice in that country. It calls on the parties to comply with the commitments undertaken and urges the United Nations to do its utmost to ensure that the outcome is understanding and reconciliation.

Lastly, ECCAS requests that the United Nations maintain the development programmes in countries that are not directly affected by war and at the same time begin the funding of programmes of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement of former combatants in countries that are in a post-conflict situation.

We have succinctly described our peace architecture and the main related needs. We therefore urge that links between our two institutions be strengthened by heightened cooperation. We also need to establish close cooperation, and for this we must work together to close the distance that separates us, that between New York and Libreville, by stepping up our communities' activities and by drawing on real support from the structures in the various departments of the United Nations, as well as on the contribution of assistance of the whole international community.

Finally, we wish to express the hope that similar meetings of this kind will be held on a regular basis so that we may together appraise the progress achieved in the quest for peace and security in our subregion.

The President: I thank the Deputy of the Economic Community of Central African States for the kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Williamson (United States of America): I would like to discuss some of the challenges faced by the Central African region and underscore that regional stability can be built only on the foundation of thriving nation-States. Several of the Central African nations are coming out of a period of instability and even of open warfare. While historic steps have been taken to bring formerly warring factions and neighbours to peace, there remain many challenges ahead. One such

significant challenge is the reintegration of former combatants into their home countries or their hometowns.

The challenge of repatriation and reintegration of former combatants, who in many cases have become internally displaced persons, is a great one that the Security Council may become increasingly compelled to address. Although neighbouring Central African States are moving toward peace, subregional conflicts like that in Uvira, Democratic Republic of the Congo, are locally a source of fear and violence and could cause renewed fighting among Central African States.

Finally, I would like to comment on a point made in the background paper distributed by the presidency which takes note of the myriad United Nations offices in the region and the six different representatives of the Secretary-General with mandates there.

Central Africa today is undergoing considerable change. Neighbouring States to the Democratic Republic of the Congo have recently withdrawn their troops from that country. Angola is coming out of a decades-long period of internal war. The recent Summit of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa in Libreville, which addressed the situation between Chad and the Central African Republic, is an example of what regional organizations can contribute to conflict resolution in the region. We urge the continuation of such efforts, and we will consider ways to assist the efforts of these organizations to achieve peace throughout Central Africa. But we would be fooling ourselves if we failed to recognize that conflict between the States of this region is still a threat and that several States remain hobbled by a lack of good governance, the absence of a rule of law and a fundamental disregard for human rights.

One of our aims here today is to strengthen cooperation between regional organizations, the international community and the United Nations system. But we must be upfront; regional cooperation can be built only on the solid foundation of healthy and wholly functioning States. These are nation-States with cohesive and transparent forms of government based on the rule of law, an active independent judiciary and a professional military distinct from civilian life. Robust regional cooperation among the Central African States can truly come only about when all nations within the region reach this threshold of domestic stability and integrity, and when each nation provides security for its entire citizenry. Ultimately, we cannot provide effective bilateral or multilateral assistance unless and until each nation functions and thrives.

The Central African region is now faced with the complex and essential challenge of making way for peace. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the recent peace accords have made specific and detailed provisions for the return of foreign troops to their countries and for former combatants to return to their home regions. The success of these plans means more than the separation of forces; the individuals returning home after many months or years must be made welcome if their reintegration is to be permanent. The last thing that the region needs is thousands upon thousands of the permanently displaced.

We are all acutely aware of the staggering cost of warfare and conflict in the Central African region, in terms of both human suffering and monetary value. Last year, the United Nations spent $296.5 million on its peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, of which the Government of the United States of America contributed $83.4 million. In addition, the Government of the United States spent $34 million last year on assistance to displaced persons in the Central African region, not including assistance to Angola. These are large sums and I cite them because they are indicative of the dimensions of the problems facing the region as a result of conflicts.

The United States takes this occasion to encourage those countries faced with the reintegration of former combatants to work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant agencies to monitor the security and safety of returning combatants. There will need to be impartial third-party verification of the safety of former combatants in order for there to be full reintegration.

At the same time, we cannot be complacent and take recent progress for granted. We need only look to the recent violence in fighting in Uvira, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, between the Mai Mai, the RCD-Goma and other armed groups, which has increased instability and tensions, as well as the risk of spillover violence in both Burundi and Rwanda. This is why it is imperative that the parties cease hostilities immediately and without preconditions. The United States Government calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of Rwanda to exert their influence on all

the parties to refrain from any action that would further inflame the situation.

Finally, I note that there are six separate Special Representatives or Envoys of the Secretary-General in the Central African region. I ask that we use this discussion to step back and look at the mandates of those offices to ensure that United Nations activities in the region are coherent and effective. I would ask the Secretary-General to brief the Security Council on the goals of those offices and on the benchmarks he would look to in fulfilling those aims. I also would ask for a specific benchmark regarding the recent call by the Security Council urging the use of the good offices of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to serve as a mediating influence in Uvira, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With Angola at peace and foreign troops withdrawing from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African region merits praise. If the momentum for peace can be maintained, then the fragile nature of the Central African region can be improved. Now the regional actors must look to the hard work of creating the constant conditions for peace. This is the hard work of developing functioning States that ensure the security of all their citizens. This includes the necessary task of welcoming back those displaced by war. In these endeavours, they have our full support.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Speaking about Africa on one of his trips to the African continent, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had this to say:

> "Africa matters. It matters if you want to produce a stable world. You cannot have four continents going forward and one going backwards."

May I extrapolate this quote by saying that all the subregions in Africa need to move forward at fairly the same pace for the progress of Africa. Therefore, any plan to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations system and the various regions of Africa is warmly welcomed and needs to be encouraged.

In January this year, the Security Council held a public meeting with the participation of several ministers from Africa and elsewhere, to discuss the conflict situations in Africa in the presence of Mr. Amara Essy, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and now Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union. Following that meeting, the Council established the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which has a clear mandate to address the issue of cooperation between the Security Council and African subregional and regional organizations.

Today's meeting is therefore of particular importance, especially given the presence of many foreign ministers of the countries of the Central African region and representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and of the United Nations Development Programme. We are particularly pleased to see the President of the Economic and Social Council at the Council table. We extend a very warm welcome to all of them.

We would also like to thank you, Sir, for the background note prepared by your delegation. It has been very helpful in preparing for this meeting.

Like other regions, several countries of Central Africa are still confronted with either armed conflicts or other forms of instability that keep claiming human lives and damaging the economic infrastructure. Those countries in the region which are in peace suffer from the indirect effects of the instabilities of their neighbours.

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), established in October 1983, has brought 11 countries of the Central African region together and, although cooperation in defence and security matters within the region has not been systematic, various efforts have been made by the countries of the region to address themselves to the security problems arising from the conflicts in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the Central African Republic, Burundi, Angola, as well as the Republic of the Congo.

With the assistance of the United Nations and through the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, established in 1992, nine countries in Central Africa signed the Non-Aggression Pact in July 1996 in Yaoundé. More recently, in July 1999, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) adopted its early-warning mechanism as the basic instrument of preventive diplomacy for the region.

For the exercise of its functions, COPAX has been provided with three tools: first, the early-warning mechanism based in Libreville, which monitors the

situation in the subregion and can take decisive measures to prevent any potential disagreement that might degenerate into open conflicts; secondly, the Defence and Security Commission, which looks after administrative and logistics matters concerning peacekeeping; and the Central African Multinational Force to execute peace security and humanitarian missions.

In May 2002, the OAU — now the African Union — held a regional organizations consultative meeting on cooperation in conflict prevention management and resolution in Addis Ababa. That meeting identified the areas through which subregional organizations could be strengthened and their cooperation with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the United Nations further enhanced.

We value highly the role played by the United Nations missions in the Central African region in managing and preventing large-scale conflicts. The missions to the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda; the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region are contributing enormously to the maintenance of peace and security in the region. There is, however, scope for greater interaction and concertation between the United Nations offices and the subregional organizations for greater synergies, which would benefit the region.

Let me highlight some of the areas where greater cooperation may be beneficial. First, with the necessary assistance and expertise, the African Union and the subregional organizations, including ECCAS, could work very closely with the United Nations on the basis of comparative advantage in advocacy, preventive actions and peacemaking.

Secondly, the subregional institutions, in a given situation could play an important role in advising the United Nations as to whether the situation requires the Organization to play a lead role or that of a simple coordinator. The respective roles of the United Nations and regional organizations could then be clearly defined at the very early stages of an emerging conflict situation.

Third, the COPAX early warning system is yet to be developed and reinforced. There is an urgent need for financial assistance, appropriate training and logistic support in order to make it fully operational. The COPAX early warning system must be in a position to alert ECCAS, the African Union and the United Nations, in that order of priority, at the very early stages of any potential conflict situation. The success of an early warning system also depends on the political will of the leaders, who should be willing to look beyond their immediate national interests in order to forge regional alliances for peace, stability and development. We are pleased to note that the heads of State of the Central African region have signed a mutual assistance pact, committing themselves to help each other against threats of armed aggression.

Fourth, the efforts at organization at the subregional level in Africa must be fully supported, so that they can build their own peacekeeping capacities.

Fifth, with appropriate assistance, ECCAS could be equipped to provide relevant information on the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the region in order to combat the illicit trafficking of such weapons, which, as we all know, are creating havoc in that part of the continent.

Sixth, likewise, in the area of illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the various countries in the region, ECCAS can be made to play a prominent role in monitoring the activities of companies and individuals engaged in such criminal activities.

Seventh, with appropriate assistance, it might be possible for ECCAS to develop a regional strategy to combat terrorism.

Eighth, the United Nations and the subregional organizations in Central Africa can also cooperate in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in order to ensure the irreversibility of the peace processes. Such cooperation could help define a regional approach to the problem of former combatants.

Ninth, the problem of internally displaced persons and refugees in Central Africa, as in any other region, could also be comprehensively addressed on a regional basis with the close cooperation and coordination of the relevant United Nations agencies and the respective subregional institutions.

Tenth, in post-conflict situations, the United Nations, in particular the Economic and Social Council, and the subregional organizations should coordinate their efforts in peace-building,

reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. With proper planning and understanding, the subregional organizations can become the operational arms of the United Nations in the region.

The Central African region has a rich base and a great potential for development. It is unfortunate that seven of the 11 countries that belong to the region are, or have been, embroiled in conflicts. There are, however, positive signs that the region is able to and wants to move forward. The recent summit, which decided on a multinational force to be deployed in the Central African Republic in order to assist the Government in peace-building and economic reconstruction, as well as the confidence-building measures among the countries of the region, are major steps in this direction. It is our duty and the duty of the United Nations to give its full support to ensure that such activities are fully implemented.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of China.

Mr. Jiang Jiang (*spoke in Chinese*): To begin with, I warmly welcome the guests from the African countries and regional organizations. I would also like to thank the delegation of Cameroon for making arrangements for this open meeting and for preparing the relevant documents for this meeting.

There are numerous countries and abundant resources in Central Africa, whose peace and stability has always been among the major concerns of the Security Council. In recent years, the United Nations has made progress, to different degrees, in its peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and the Central African Republic. However, the situation in Central Africa remains grave. Armed conflicts are yet to be completely settled. Poverty and disease are still ravaging countries in the region. Economic reconstruction is a long-term, arduous task.

Today, it is of great significance for the Security Council to conduct exchanges of views with African countries, as well as with the regional organizations, strengthening cooperation and maintaining regional peace and security.

We are very pleased to see that in recent years, African countries have exerted themselves greatly in playing their role in the collective security system, in jointly preventing conflicts and in cooperating to promote development, which has gained broad acknowledgement from the international community.

The African Union, established in July this year, is a reflection of the strong desire of African people to seek settlements to African issues through collective self-reliance. There is a multitude of economic, regional and cooperation organizations. And, in recent years, mechanisms for maintaining peace and security have also been established, which have played a major role in neutralizing regional conflicts.

The conflict of Angola has basically come to an end and the peace process has good prospects. For all of this, African regional organizations should be credited for their efforts.

The conflict of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is moving in the right direction. The United Nations, as well as South Africa as the third party monitoring mechanism, are playing a pivotal role.

The Central African regional organization has recently decided to dispatch a monitoring force to the Central African Republic, which will surely help to alleviate the situation there.

We have always believed that the Security Council, as the main organ for maintaining international peace and security, has an inescapable responsibility for settling such issues in Africa. Therefore, we support the idea that the Security Council, in settling issues relating to conflicts in Africa, should strengthen its cooperation and coordination with the African Union, as well as with other subregional organizations, and pay due heed to the views of the African people and jointly work out strategies for settling the conflicts in question.

It is our hope that the relevant missions of the United Nations, as well the offices, should further strengthen their communication, coordination and cooperation with the African Union and the other subregional organizations of Central Africa.

In the same vein, we believe that the realization of peace and security is intricately linked with the issue of development. Poverty and economic gaps have, to a great extent, resulted in the underdevelopment of countries in Central Africa. They are both the root causes and among the consequences of the incessant conflicts there.

The international community should pay close attention to the issue. It should be acknowledged that economic globalization has had a negative impact on African countries and it is a fact that these countries are being increasingly marginalized.

Only by increasing development aid, including budgetary humanitarian assistance, to these African countries and by assisting these African countries in developing their economy, in ridding themselves of poverty and in consolidating post-war peace, can a solid basis be laid for a comprehensive settlement of the conflicts.

We welcome and support the New Partnership for Africa's Development adopted by African countries in July last year. We were also very happy to see that, this year for the first time, the General Assembly jointly considered items relating to peace, conflict and development in Africa, which shows that the United Nations is paying more attention to settling African issues.

The promotion of peace and development in the African region and strengthening our cooperation with African countries are important parts of China's foreign relations. The Sino-African Cooperation Forum, established in October 2000, and its follow-up activities have functioned smoothly. The Chinese Government has always, within its capacity, provided necessary support to African countries. China has signed a debt reduction agreement in the amount of $10 billion with more than 30 countries of Central Africa and other subregions, and has essentially implemented its commitments.

The Chinese Government recently decided to increase its participation in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). In the future, the Chinese Government will continue to strengthen its consistent cooperation with Central African countries, support the United Nations in strengthening its cooperation and coordination and make further efforts to achieve peace, stability and development in the region.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish, at the outset, to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for your very valuable background note (S/2002/1179) on the topic under discussion. We also warmly welcome the presence of Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Central African States.

It is indeed very regrettable that a series of armed conflicts have ravaged the Central African region, some of which have endured for several years and all of which have had dire humanitarian, social, economic, security and political consequences. It is high time that the region, and the African continent in general, enjoyed peace and security.

Over the years, the Security Council has devoted much attention to the settlement of disputes in the Central African region. The Council has established five peacekeeping or peacemaking missions in the region, out of the 12 missions in the African continent as a whole. If that demonstrates anything, it is the special attention paid by the Security Council to the settlement of disputes in that region and to the establishment of peace and security therein. The Central African region deserves the attention devoted to it by the United Nations system generally, and by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in particular. I also salute the very important role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, through his own efforts and those of his personal envoys and representatives.

Syria welcomed the establishment of the African Union and the fact that some of its organs have begun to function. We are confident that the Union will pursue the efforts initiated by its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, to find permanent solutions to the varied problems of the continent.

In addition to regional efforts, efforts are also being undertaken at the subregional level. But such efforts have often suffered from a lack of resources, escalating conflicts and the fact that some of the economic groups established among African States have not been able to address those problems. In that regard, Syria considers that we need to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of the African States, the African Union and its recently established organs so that they can address, resolve and manage these crises and achieve collective security.

The establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) reflects the urgent need for cooperation with the United Nations for conflict prevention, settlement and management in Central Africa, for dealing with post-conflict situations and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement, and for supporting progress towards the maintenance of peace.

Experience has shown that conflicts in the States of Central Africa need to be dealt with in a more comprehensive manner not limited to the particular country concerned, but rather always taking into account the surrounding climate, because of the close ties between neighbouring countries, which bear on the root causes of conflicts and on their settlement.

Syria welcomes the high-level visits made by leaders of countries of the region to neighbouring States to settle disputes peacefully and to restore mutual confidence and good relations in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness, in full accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. These include the recent visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Bujumbura, Burundi, which yielded very positive results for both countries.

We also welcome the agreements recently signed between several States of the region, all of which augur a peaceful solution for conflicts. These include the recent Pretoria Agreement on the Great Lakes region, which reaffirmed earlier fundamental agreements such as those signed at Lusaka, Sun City and Pretoria. The Republic of South Africa and Tanzania played a very important role in organizing and bringing together the parties to the conflict, in facilitating the agreements among them and in implementing those agreements.

We also welcome the Luanda agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda of 6 September 2002, which will lead to the withdrawal of Ugandan forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to cooperation and normalization of relations between the two countries. We also welcome the summit conferences held among heads of State of the region, such as the regional summit on Burundi, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 7 October 2002. That was a first step towards a comprehensive ceasefire agreement that would include all the parties and was a step towards implementing the Arusha Agreement.

We also welcome the summit of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), which was held in Libreville, Gabon, on 2 October 2002, to examine the situation between the Central African Republic and Chad. A few days ago, the Security Council welcomed (see S/PRST/2002/28) that summit and its outcome, and supported its decisions, particularly that concerning the deployment in the Central African Republic of an International Observation Force composed of 300 to 350 troops from the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon and Mali. That is an extremely important subregional effort, to which African States are contributing in order to maintain peace and security in the area.

That new force will continue the tasks begun by its predecessor from the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, which too has become an African force pursuant to a decision of the conflict settlement committee meeting at the ministerial level, which was endorsed at the African Union summit held in Durban, South Africa.

The forces have played a very important role in maintaining peace and stability in the Central African Republic. The Sahelian-Saharan Community has exerted tremendous efforts to achieve national reconciliation among all the parties.

We would like to mention here the efforts of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which recently received the President of Chad, Mr. Idriss Deby, and the President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, in its capacity as the current Chairman of the Sahelian-Saharan Community. It is also making the necessary international contacts, with a view to withdrawing the Sahelian-Saharan Community forces and to enabling the new force to work to maintain peace and security; to protect the democratically elected President and State institutions; to deal with the political and economic problems facing the Central African Republic; and to extend the necessary financial support, of which they are in dire need and which is one of the most important elements of stability in the region.

Syria believes that the international community should make it possible for African States to deploy multinational African forces in the States of the region in order to settle African disputes, as happened recently in the Central African Republic, and that it should also encourage and support African initiatives to settle disputes in that continent.

We are in favour of finding effective solutions by addressing the real causes of conflicts in the region, and we believe also that the recommendations of the Working Group on the Causes of Conflict should be taken into consideration. We would like to commend

the efforts of Ambassador Koonjul, Chairman of the Working Group, in this respect.

We must also go beyond narrow solutions and embrace more comprehensive ones, in cooperation with other bodies of the United Nations system such as the Economic and Social Council. It is also very important not to overlook the role of international organizations, donor countries and donor organizations, as well as the importance of the assistance given by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Bretton Woods institutions for the reconstruction of the economies of the States of the region, so that the peoples of the region can enjoy the dividends of peace, encourage confidence-building and bring about sustainable peace and development.

To achieve this objective, we must ensure an early resolution of local conflicts and support regional economic integration, encourage regional trade and put an end to commercial operations run by criminal elements that wish to exploit the wealth of the countries concerned. This will pave the way for legitimate and transparent forms of trade, which will supplant the illegal exploitation of the natural resources and wealth of some of those States.

We support the provision of assistance to the States of Central Africa to give them the means to manage and settle their own disputes and so that they can play an important role in African integration, in accordance with their strategic geographical position, and so that they can shape their own destiny, free of the control and hegemony of other countries.

In conclusion, I should like to thank all the facilitators, who have undertaken tremendous efforts with a view to achieving agreement among the countries concerned and the various groups within those States, and I should like also to acknowledge the efforts of the States of the region and of their leaders, who have spared no personal effort to achieve national reconciliation.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): May I first express the thanks of my delegation to you, Mr. President, for organizing today's public meeting on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa. May I also, again on behalf of my delegation, welcome the Ministers from the region to our meeting today.

The Ambassador of Denmark has already made a statement to this meeting of the Council on behalf of the European Union, and Ireland, of course, fully associates itself with that statement.

The world has an unfinished agenda of duty and of debt to the Great Lakes region and to Central Africa. As the presidency note for our meeting states, Central Africa has the sorry record of seven of its 11 countries being racked by devastating and ruinous conflicts over recent years. The cost has been countless lives lost, incalculable suffering, and economies, in large measure, destroyed. This has been a humanitarian disaster without parallel in our time.

Now, despite all the daunting challenges, there is across Central Africa a real moment of opportunity and hope that can, in turn, allow rebuilding and healing. This is an opportunity that must not be lost. It is an opportunity that must be fully seized not just by all the countries of the Great Lakes region and of Central Africa but by the United Nations and by the world.

The three regional organizations in the subregion — the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries — need to be strongly supported and encouraged. In particular, the revival of ECCAS is to be warmly welcomed. The regional organizations will have a major role to play in the period ahead in consolidating and anchoring the peace.

At the ministerial meeting last August in Bangui of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, ministers from 10 Central African countries emphasized the importance of the creation of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) and urged countries that have not yet ratified the related Protocol to do so without delay. Ministers also expressed their deep concern at the persistence of armed conflict in the subregion and the importance of strengthening regional relations, so as to lessen tensions and combat insecurity in the border areas.

On regional cooperation and on cooperation between the United Nations and the subregion, there are four particular points I would like to emphasize on behalf of Ireland today.

First, regional cooperation is a critical dimension in building peace in Central Africa. Much is already being quietly achieved in this area — as we heard from

many ministers this morning — from joint training courses and joint border patrols to summit meetings on security matters. We have, however, seen all too clearly evidence in the subregion that intra-State conflict all too easily becomes inter-State conflict across the region. There are, in many cases, the closest ethnic and linguistic links between countries in the region.

It can be no surprise, therefore, that the consequences of war and violence have spread in recent years to engulf much of the subregion. Many steps can now be taken by the international community to help address root causes of the conflict, including by the early convening of an international conference on the Great Lakes region. Many challenges can be tackled effectively only by joint actions related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the refugee tragedy in the region; economic reconstruction; issues of resources; and by strengthened cooperation. Consequences of war left to fester can all too easily lead to further instability and conflict.

Secondly, the United Nations and the international community as a whole must strongly and actively support strengthened regional cooperation in Central Africa. The establishment of the African Union will, of course, lend support to this process. But support by the international community cannot be desultory or timid; conflict prevention is not just about early warning systems or operational procedures, however important these are. It must also involve supporting structural conflict-prevention policies; the promotion of regional joint actions; and the deployment of necessary resources.

The Secretary-General, in his July progress report on the implementation of recommendations in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable pace and sustainable development in Africa, rightly reminded us that mobilizing international support for peace is essential. This is especially true in Central Africa.

Thirdly, we need more coherence in the United Nations, including at the inter-governmental level, to support the national and regional peace-building and conflict-prevention efforts in Central Africa. This means not just the common country assessments in the United Nations Development Programmes addressing — as they do — conflict issues, but, critically, the international community backing this up with necessary resources. Too often in the Security Council we have received briefings from the Secretariat or the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that have made reference to United Nations appeals for funding in conflict or peace-building programme areas having been — at best — only partially funded. We have also had donors not always following through on commitments made; the Central African Republic and Burundi are obvious examples in this respect. We need greater coherence, focus and commitment in this whole area. The new Security Council and Economic and Social Council working groups on conflict resolution in Africa will have an important role to play in this respect.

The Central African subregion is as clear an example as can be found of this need for greater coherence and flexibility on the part of the international community. We have recently made encouraging progress. Decisions by the World Bank, the European Development Fund and other bodies in respect of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, are to be warmly welcomed. The Bank's conflict analysis framework is also to be welcomed. But the general point stands: there is a need to relax conditionalities in post-conflict funding, to ensure the early release of funds promised by donors and to promote, as a matter of the greatest urgency, administrative capacity, investment in human resources and a reduction in the debt burden in the Central African region.

Fourthly, the United Nations system and the international community must support regional economic cooperation in every way possible. This is something that the European Union is actively doing through the Cotonou Agreement. Building peace also means supporting the Central African region so that it has the chance to play its full and fair part in the African and world economies. Regional cooperation in economic programmes, the pooling of resources and the sharing of infrastructural costs makes eminent sense.

A strengthened partnership between the United Nations system and Central Africa is one of the most important tasks facing this Organization in seeking to support peace and sustainable development in Africa. But this, in the main, will require political will by Member States, and we in the Security Council have our own critical role to play. We owe this to Central Africa and its peoples.

Mr. Traoré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to thank you, Sir, for having so judiciously organized this open meeting on the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and Central Africa in the maintenance of international peace and security. We would like to pay tribute to the Foreign Ministers of the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, who are with us today and whose contribution is a measure of the success of our work.

I am duty bound to pay tribute to the Regional Director of the World Bank, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the representative of the United Nations Development Programme and other participants who are with us today and whose various statements have contributed to the high quality of our debate.

In order to understand the need for heightened cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa, it would be helpful to note a number of elements that attest to the complex nature of the situation in that subregion of the African continent — an area that is rich in mineral, hydraulic and agricultural resources.

With the passage of time and as a consequence of events, Central Africa has become one of the major concerns of the United Nations. Despite some encouraging signs of progress, a number of hotbeds of tension persist, thus undermining the subregional balance and producing worrying humanitarian scenarios.

It is now clear that greed for mineral resources, the debt burden, the deterioration of the terms of trade and problems associated with governance and poverty are among the factors underlying current conflicts.

My delegation notes and laments the fact that seven of the 11 countries of Central Africa are now, or have been, in the grip of intra-State or inter-State conflicts. Likewise, of the 12 peacekeeping, peace-building and peacemaking missions, five are operating in Central Africa. Furthermore, six out of a total of 20 representatives of the Secretary-General are based there.

This United Nations presence reflects the importance attached by the Organization to the settlement of conflict in Central Africa, as well as its resolve to strengthen, on an ongoing basis, the mechanisms that it brings to bear in tackling these recurrent crises.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the diplomatic, political and military success achieved at the regional level in the Great Lakes region, with the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of Rwanda, and the Luanda Agreement, signed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of Uganda.

That development contrasts negatively with the situation on the ground in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is continuing to worsen to a dangerous extent. We urge South Africa and the Secretary-General — the third party — to continue their endeavours to overcome the remaining obstacles and to secure unconditional compliance with the commitments undertaken. For its part, the Security Council must ensure the efficient conduct of the operations. The mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo clearly needs to be revised in order to enable it better to cope with the new challenges.

We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue its efforts to conclude an inclusive, comprehensive political agreement in keeping with the spirit of Sun City. We encourage Burundi to join in this momentum for peace and to normalize its relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the area of security.

Furthermore, Guinea takes the view that the peace agreement concluded between UNITA and the Government of Angola is an example of political wisdom that should be emulated. It welcomes the adoption of resolution 1439 (2002) concerning the phased lifting of sanctions, which marks a positive landmark in the peace process.

My delegation has also noted the decision taken at the Summit of the Heads of State of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, held at Libreville on 2 October, concerning the deployment in Bangui of a multinational African contingent of 300 or 350. It endorses the appeal for assistance to troop-contributing countries aimed at enabling that operation

to stabilize the Central African Republic to be carried out successfully. The United Nations must shoulder its responsibility in that regard.

Experience teaches us that peace, once restored, must be consolidated if it is to be regarded as definitively re-established. Progress achieved at the political level must go hand in hand with financial assistance for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and economic recovery in the States of the region. Without the proper means, the implementation of any political agreement is doomed to failure. Political will in itself is not sufficient. This phase will require the direct involvement of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with its mandate, as well as that of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system.

Furthermore, we must acknowledge that even though subregional organizations often have an economic mission, they have gradually expanded their jurisdiction to include questions of security and peacekeeping. In these two areas, the United Nations should provide for close, harmonious and efficient cooperation.

Bearing in mind the interdependent nature of the conflicts in that subregion, my delegation proposes setting up a United Nations regional office in Central Africa responsible for the integrated management of conflicts, following the example of the one in Dakar for West Africa. Such a new partnership will make it possible to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations on the one hand, and on the other, the States of the region, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa.

Finally, my delegation remains convinced of the urgent need to hold an international conference on peace, security, democracy and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region. Such a conference would be an opportunity to evaluate the progress achieved in the implementation of bilateral agreements and to reflect on a comprehensive approach to the resolution of outstanding problems in Central Africa. In that perspective, the United Nations should provide guidance for the resulting programme of action. That would require a dispassionate, efficient and future-oriented preparatory process.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): First, let me join you, Mr. President, in warmly welcoming the ministers who have come here to join us for this debate. I hope they found it worth their while to travel all the way to New York for this open meeting. I also want to join our colleagues in commending you for organizing this debate on Central Africa. I believe that this is the first time that the Council is actually having a debate on Central Africa as a whole. We cannot say that for sure because we have been on the Council for only two years. We do not have the long institutional memory of the permanent members, but whatever little research that we have done suggests that this is the first time that the Council is addressing Central Africa as a whole, rather than addressing just Burundi, Rwanda, the Great Lakes and so on. So, we commend you for opening a new frontier in the Council's work. We also want to thank you very much for the background paper (S/2002/1179) and also thank the Secretariat for providing us with a paper this morning on this region.

In our view, the problem is, in fact, clearly enunciated in your paper, Mr. President. Indeed, you have been remarkably candid in the opening paragraph of your paper where you say,

> "Despite enormous potential and vast mineral, water and agricultural resources, Central Africa in the broad sense ... has been slow in embarking on its economic and social development, and projects to the world the least positive image of all the subregions of Africa." (*S/2002/1179*)

We commend you, Mr. President, for stating the problem so clearly. At the same time, the question that came to our mind was how could this debate today make a difference to the situation? How can we ensure that at the end of the day, after this open debate, we have actually made a contribution to solving the problem that you have described?

We think that there are at least four different ways in which such a debate can be helpful. The first way is that, clearly, such a debate generates a lot of awareness of the problem. I am a bit disappointed by the lack of participation of Member States from outside the subregion. But even so, I think the sheer fact that the debate has been held and will be reported in the United Nations Journal and in the provisional verbatim record will, I think, generate a lot of interest. Certainly, Mr. President, your paper alone, for example, has taught us that there is a tremendous multiplicity of initiatives in the region. For example, you talk of the

regional cooperation being based on a tripod comprising the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the Economic Community of Central African States. And, of course, you talk of the role of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, too. We think that all this information is very valuable. It is a debate such as this that generates the information that we need to make a judgement.

The second way in which such a debate can be helpful is if as a result of it we develop a desire to have a certain degree of conceptual coherence in the work done by the United Nations system and by others in the region. Frankly, until we listened to the statements today, we had no idea of the range of initiatives and of the work being done. I think that at some point in time someone somewhere — we are not sure who actually — but clearly somewhere in the United Nations system, someone has to take the responsibility for seeing whether these different initiatives fit together. I thought, for example, Ambassador Williamson from the United States made a concrete suggestion. He said that there are six Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the region. The obvious question to ask is: do the six Special Representatives coordinate their work or do their work in individual parcels with no coordination? I am not sure what the answer to the question is, but apparently yesterday at the Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa, chaired by Ambassador Koonjul, a discussion has begun on how to coordinate the work of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. I hope that will make a contribution. But it is not just the Special Representatives because, if you listen to the statements made today, there is a tremendous variety of work coming. And if I heard the Minister from the Central African Republic correctly in translation, he said that given the multiplicity of initiatives, we must develop synergy among the initiatives that occur in the region. Again, I hope that today's debate will result in a sort of synergy of all the initiatives that we have seen so far in the region.

The third way in which this debate can be helpful is for us to try to focus on the concrete follow-up action that needs to be taken after today's meeting and after the statements that have been made today. Clearly, one of the structural weaknesses of the Council — of course, we all know how powerful the Council is internationally and all that — but one of its built-in structural weaknesses is its inability to monitor whether its resolutions, presidential statements and press statements have been implemented. There is literally no mechanism that follows through on all this. Of course, in the Central African region, we have a tremendous number of resolutions, presidential statements and various calls for action. I think that at some point in time we have got to sit down and do an audit of what we have decided, then look at what we have actually implemented and what we have not implemented. And if we have not implemented, we should also see why not. To take just one example that has been mentioned by several speakers in today's discussion: there is clearly a need to convene an international conference on the Great Lakes. That is one of the themes that I have heard being discussed. The question is, when do we begin work on such a conference? What is required to ensure its success? How does the Council need to prepare for it? I hope that today's debate generates the awareness that we need to see this sort of follow-up action.

The fourth way in which this debate can be helpful is by making everyone aware of their respective responsibilities to ensure success in the region. As we all know, development is a partnership. It is a partnership between the donor community and the countries of the region. For that partnership to succeed, both sides have got to see eye to eye on what each side can do. If I heard the statements from the donor countries here accurately, I thought they were sending a fairly nuanced statement, saying "We can do so much if we get this from you". That was the sort of message that they were sending. If, as a result of today's debate, a better understanding develops within the donor community, the recipient countries and, of course, within other organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, if all can see eye to eye on their respective roles in the region, it would make a difference to the region.

For all these reasons, Mr. President, we commend you for organizing this debate, even though the participation from outside the region has not been as good as we would have liked it to be, we believe that you will make a contribution. And we hope that the provisional verbatim record of this meeting will serve as a very valuable resource for the Council in future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Singapore for his suggestions. I think

those suggestions will be included in the presidential statement.

Mr. Leplinskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting is further confirmation of the serious concern of the international community and the Security Council at the situation in Africa, as well as the desire to work out an effective strategy for peacekeeping and the sustainable development of Africa.

We are alarmed that domestic and international crises are having a destabilizing effect on the situation of entire regions. The States of Central Africa are no exception.

There are no quick recipes to resolving the enormous job of settling regional conflicts. Multi-track, painstaking efforts are required by Africa's friends and, primarily, by the Africans themselves, in order to break the familiar vicious cycle: from lack of development, to social problems, political and military instability, conflict and, ultimately, the collapse of development programmes.

However, we are pleased to note that we have come to today's meeting with some positive achievements. Thanks to the efforts of the world community, the United Nations and the Security Council, as well as regional and subregional organizations, significant success has been achieved in resolving the situation in Angola and, to a certain extent, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Active mediation is under way to stabilize relations between the Central African Republic and Chad and there has been normalization in the relationship among the States of the Great Lakes region at the intergovernmental level.

The Russian Federation notes a significant increase in the activities of the Africans themselves in preventing and resolving conflict situations, which attests to their willingness and resolve to assume greater responsibility for solving existing problems. Only a few days ago, the Security Council welcomed the decision to deploy an International Observation Force in the Central African Republic, composed of soldiers primarily from the Central African States.

An important role in post-conflict peacekeeping and peace-building is played by the regional and subregional organizations. Because of their geographical proximity and their greater familiarity with unique local situations, these organizations could become centres for the coordination of sustainable development and early warning of possible dangers. An example of this is the decision taken by the Central African States to establish a Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa and to sign important documents, as well as a Non-Aggression Pact and a Mutual Assistance Pact.

We think it is important to make active use of the provisions of the United Nations Charter that encourage regional and subregional organizations to take the initiative in preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. This, in particular, implies expanding the practice of regional peacekeeping operations with the support of the Security Council. Of course, the appropriate principles of the United Nations Charter must be observed when launching peacekeeping operations. The carrying out of operations that use force by regional and subregional structures is permissible only if there is clear authorization by the Security Council.

The Russian Federation intends to continue giving whatever assistance it can to resolve the problems of Africa, with whose countries we are traditionally bound by friendly relations, and sometimes by partnerships. Africa was, and remains, a priority for us.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin, Sir, by applauding your initiative in organizing this debate, which has been very interesting and, indeed, unique in many ways. It is not the kind of discussion, at least, that we are accustomed to having had in the Council over the last few years. My delegation welcomes the presence of the Ministers of the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, I would like in particular to mention, the Minister of Equatorial Guinea, who is the representative of our Spanish language on the African continent. I also wish to welcome the contribution of the Economic and Social Council, through its President, and the other bodies and agencies that have made a significant contribution here.

During our term on the Council, we have been struck by the contrast between the magnitude of the conflicts that we see in the Central African region, particularly in Angola and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in the subregion's institutional

capacity to engage in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the promotion of regional peace and security. For this reason, we are gratified to note the efforts that the United Nations has been making to promote confidence-building measures among the countries of the Central African region, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 46/37, adopted in 1991. It is thanks to this resolution that we now have a United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The joint meeting that this Standing Committee will be holding tomorrow with the members of the Economic Community of Central African States should help to tighten the relationship between the United Nations and the region.

We recognize that there has been no lack of initiatives to strengthen regional security. The Non-Aggression Pact has been mentioned, as well as has the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, along with the initiative to set up an early warning system.

But if there is one thing that appears clear from all our endeavours to establish collective security mechanisms anywhere in the world, it is the need to have the resolute political support of the States participating in such institutional arrangements. Without this factor, we cannot make the move from the academic to the political level, from theory to practice, or from imagination to reality. This is the most fundamental element if the United Nations or any other agent external to the region is to associate itself with subregional peace and security endeavours.

In this connection, I would like to mention some elements of comparable importance that were presented at a seminar on the regional approach to conflicts in Africa, held in August of last year as a separate event during the Colombia presidency of the Security Council. First and foremost, as was noted there, it is necessary to arrive at a definition of the scope or extent of the region itself, so that its members may identify with it. This will make it possible to build links in many spheres of regional life, including the economic and cultural ones, and ultimately forge a community united for the purposes of security; or, as Anglo-Saxon political scientists call them, "security communities".

Secondly, regional actors need to have a positive perception of the external actors with which they wish to associate themselves in order to establish a regional security order. External actors may be other countries or international bodies that are interested in the region.

Thirdly, there might be a need for a regional actor that could generate and maintain cohesiveness in the region as well as provide the leadership required by circumstances.

Fourthly, it is necessary that the interests of the major and most influential participants in a regional security mechanism not run counter to the development of the regional approach.

Finally, we reaffirm that it is the members of a region themselves that must identify their own needs and the partners with which they wish to work in order to create or strengthen their peace and security mechanisms. In the case of the Central African region, we believe that the United Nations is in a good position to contribute to ensuring peace. Its presence in the Great Lakes region, in Angola and in the Central African Republic, as well as the work of the Standing Advisory Committee for Security Questions in Central Africa, are paving the way for beneficial cooperation in the future.

Mrs. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico is very honoured by the presence of the various Ministers from the Central African region who have participated with us in today's debate on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security. Those Ministers' statements should be the object of thought and study for all Council members.

The Strategic Partnership for Lasting Peace is an initiative that Mexico has been promoting in the Security Council with a view to consolidating the activities of the various bodies and organizations of the United Nations. The Partnership might even be applied outside the United Nations system and might help to improve the Organization's cooperation with other regional and subregional agencies involved in conflict settlement and in the promotion of economic development.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is recognized in Chapter VIII of the Charter. Proper interaction among these bodies ensures not only better knowledge of the situation on the ground, but also a strategy that is commensurate with needs. In Central Africa, a region that has been

continually afflicted by war and violence, urgent action is required on the part of Governments themselves, subregional bodies and the United Nations system, based on a strategic pooling of efforts to establish and build peace.

Peace-building in Central Africa requires attention in at least three principal respects: first, conflict settlement, or peacemaking; secondly, the promotion of economic development and institution-building; and thirdly, conflict prevention, or addressing and eradicating the causes of conflicts. All that should be based on the concept of strategic partnership in order to guarantee positive results.

Despite the vast natural resources of the Central African region, it is evident that the region's capacity to use them for development has not been fully utilized, given the continued violence and the civil wars. Conflict situations have not only blocked social and economic advances, but have also diverted income from the exploitation of natural resources to illicit purposes, in particular the purchase of weapons and the black market.

Changing the face of Central Africa and transforming it into a region of peace requires a regional effort. For that, we must rely, above all, on the resolve of the countries concerned, through individual, bilateral, subregional, regional or international actions. There can be no successful peace initiative without political will.

We have taken note of the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to adapt to the region's new realities. Its observer status in the United Nations offers the Community a panoply of opportunities to interact with the Organization with a view to achieving its objectives. We encourage its members to intensify its activities and to strengthen its links with the African Union and with the United Nations.

The work of the United Nations to strengthen institutions and national capacities in order to promote national and regional development should be accompanied by effective measures on the part of the international community for the development of human resources, for the effective mobilization of financial resources, for the transfer of technology and for access to markets. In that context, my delegation should like to express its highest praise and support for the initiative of African countries to establish, within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a peace and security mechanism to deal with the political and social vulnerability caused by conflicts. We believe that NEPAD's attention to questions related to the prevention, management and solution of conflicts; to peacemaking and peacekeeping; to reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction after conflicts; and to combating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and anti-personnel mines is part of an overall strategy to eradicate the causes of conflicts with a view to peace-building on the continent.

The promotion of economic development is absolutely necessary, given that the wars on the African continent are the principal cause of poverty, displacement and the destruction of communities. War has had an immediate economic impact that prevents development and thus undermines the economic and social well-being of the region's countries.

Regional and subregional organizations should have the necessary capacity to support their members in overcoming the crises caused by war. Preventing Central Africa from being regarded as a high-risk region for investment should be the objective of the regional agencies. Coordination of activities with the United Nations and with the Bretton Woods institutions is not only positive, but essential. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa has been working to support the economic development of the 53 African countries. Its relationship with the Economic and Social Council ensures better coordination of efforts.

Undoubtedly, economic integration and the development of robust regional structures may help to eliminate the negative effects of conflicts. While Africa should be devoting resources to peacemaking and peace-building, it is important that subregional and regional bodies be able to establish measures for conflict prevention. Establishing and/or strengthening the necessary structures to prevent conflicts is a basic task.

Due attention to disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement activities for former combatants, to the processes of reconciliation, to institution-building and to the promotion of economic development are basic conditions for the elimination of the causes of conflicts. Civil society must take an active part in those activities in a coordinated way with the Governments

and the various agencies charged with addressing such issues.

We encourage the Governments of Central Africa to continue to work to strengthen subregional organizations in order to adapt, redefine or strengthen the objectives and structures of those bodies, as they deem appropriate. In the process of identifying measures, there should be input from the countries of the subregion, which are best acquainted with their realities and needs. That would serve to adequately define goals and to improve coordination and synergy of efforts between the various agencies responsible for peace-building.

We applaud the decision by Economic Community of Central African States to establish new mechanisms to address Africa's problems. In that vein, the joint meeting to be held tomorrow here at Headquarters between the Community and the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa will contribute to improving relations between the two bodies, thereby ensuring more sustained attention to the problems of the subregion.

Mexico knows we can count on the resolve of the countries of Central Africa to work to strengthen their subregional mechanisms and to define the guidelines to govern their activities. No one can address, design and implement measures that take into account their interests better than the people of Central Africa themselves.

In following the example of the Organization of African Unity, its predecessor, the African Union is taking a leading role in activities aimed at promoting peace. We have no doubt that the strategic partnership between the African Union, various subregional mechanisms and the United Nations will bear fruit in the form of the peace that the countries of the region so much wish to see. A number of countries of the Central African region are demonstrating their resolve to establish, and build upon, peace. The recent efforts by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Burundi and the Central African Republic attest to the determination and commitment of those countries to achieve peace. The African Union has the necessary experience to support subregional organizations and strengthen the strategic partnership to produce a lasting settlement to conflicts. We hope that proper use will be made of that experience.

Mexico has faith in the capacity and the conviction of the countries of Africa to bring about peace. As I stated earlier, Central Africa is showing signs of its commitment to peace. We would like to take this opportunity to applaud those efforts and to reaffirm Mexico's support for the decision that these States are taking to move forward with the peace-building process. We are convinced that the strategic partnership at the subregional level, combined with regional and international actions — and in particular with the resolve and commitment of the countries concerned — will enable Africa to become a continent of peace. The Security Council should closely follow these activities and be prepared to act in support of those efforts.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank you very much, Mr. President, for having organized this public meeting of the Security Council on the subject of Central Africa. My delegation would also like to thank you for the background note prepared by Cameroon, which provides a very useful basis for today's debate. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his detailed and useful briefing.

I am especially pleased to welcome the presence at the Council table of the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Šimonović. His presence provides another example of cooperation and partnership between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

The presence in the Chamber of several Ministers from Central African countries attests to the importance of this debate. I would like to thank them for their important contributions to this debate.

Bulgaria, as a country associated with the European Union, fully associates itself with the statement delivered this morning by the Ambassador of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. I would therefore simply like to make the following additional comments in my national capacity.

Bulgaria fully supports the initiatives undertaken by regional organizations aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts in Africa. In partnership with the African Union and the United Nations, regional organizations are the appropriate instruments to

guarantee peace in crisis areas. In that regard, my country welcomes the initiative adopted at the Libreville Summit of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa on 2 October to deploy an international observation force in the Central African Republic. This very worthwhile initiative is fully supported by the Security Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to United Nations Member States to make a contribution to the countries taking part in the international observation force. My country also believes that it would be appropriate to think about the possible contribution to be made to this initiative by the United Nations system through the United Nations Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic. The energetic work done by General Cissé within the framework of this regional effort should be applauded.

Bulgaria shares the view that we need to take up the question of ways and means to strengthen regional cooperation. There is no doubt that strengthening such cooperation will contribute to fully integrating the countries of the region into the global economy, to preventing conflicts and to building peace in this crisis-ridden region. The region's potential with regard to both human and natural resources is enormous. To take advantage of those assets, the countries of Central Africa will have to demonstrate their political will to cooperate within the framework of regional institutions.

Many of those who spoke before me referred to the internal shortcomings of some countries of the region during various stages of their recent history. They also stated that those shortcomings are actually the source of the current conflicts in the region. I would like to say that I fully agree with that analysis. I will also add that the nation-States of Central Africa will never be viable in the absence of full respect for human rights, the establishment of the rule of law and a society and political system that are truly pluralistic and democratic.

I believe there is consensus within the Security Council about the need for the United Nations to give greater attention to the Central African region, including by strengthening relations between the United Nations system and regional organizations. The question now is one of determining the avenues to pursue to improve relations between the Central African region and the United Nations. One such path is to pursue cooperation between the Organization and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In his report of 17 August 2001, the Secretary-General detailed the cooperation between that regional organization and the United Nations, links that should be maintained and developed. For example, we should explore the idea of deploying an inter-agency mission to the countries of Central Africa, similar to the mission sent to West Africa under the leadership of former Under-Secretary-General Fall. Such a mission could produce a report containing recommendations aimed at developing an integrated and coherent regional approach for that part of Africa.

Greater cooperation between the United Nations system and regional organizations will not be possible unless the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is consolidated and continued. We welcome the significant progress made recently in that peace process in that country. I am thinking particularly of the two bilateral agreements between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Governments of Uganda and Rwanda. The Pretoria and Luanda Agreements create an encouraging, positive and fresh momentum in the peace process in that country. They represent a window of opportunity that the international community must support without fail.

Bulgaria also welcomes the goodwill demonstrated by the countries concerned in recent months, as well as the praiseworthy efforts made by South Africa and Angola to promote peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In view of this new momentum, Bulgaria fully supports the new operational concepts for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) presented in the special report of the Secretary-General, and we support his recommendation that the total strength of MONUC be increased to 8,700.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, for the background paper and for the initiative of organizing this open meeting and thus helping keep Central Africa at the forefront of the Council's attention.

The United Kingdom supports the statement by the presidency of the European Union. We welcome the presence of the Ministers here and their contributions to the debate. Like the previous speaker, I am very

pleased to see the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Simonović, here today.

As earlier interventions have borne out, we see today's meeting as essentially about making effective operational linkages. My delegation has said on many occasions how important the United Kingdom considers it to be to have greater coordination between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. This coordination is important in itself and an illustration of what I think is now a commonplace in our theory, if not always our practice: peace, security and economic development are fundamentally linked and must be addressed in parallel.

This linkage is certainly a reality that the people of many African countries experience in their daily lives and that African Governments have encapsulated in two of the key initiatives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in the areas of peace and security and of political and economic good governance. It is unsurprising that the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) are redefining their roles to take account of collective security, because the economic development of the region cannot be addressed without tackling conflict.

There is another set of linkages that we need to consider — those between subregional, regional and international efforts to address conflict and development. I think there is a two-way exchange to be had here. Efforts at the sub-regional level can give substance and shape to the NEPAD initiative, and effective sub-regional organizations will be building blocks for an effective African Union. In the other direction, NEPAD and the African Union can provide a context for subregional and national efforts, as well as a framework for international support. The United Kingdom would also welcome direct input from the region to the work of the Security Council and ECOSOC working groups on Africa. At the same time, we need to be sure that each part of the system is playing to its strengths and not duplicating. The Central African subregional organizations need to define their role according to where they can best add value. How can they feed into the NEPAD initiatives and into the NEPAD peer review mechanism, and how can the different subregional organisations interact?

The Council has welcomed efforts by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) to address the tension between the Central African Republic and Chad by deploying an international observer force. This is a very concrete demonstration of political will. We hope that the force will work closely with United Nations mechanisms on the ground.

Above all, we welcome efforts to revive cooperation in the Central African region, because the problems and the potential of the countries of the region are so clearly inter-linked. But expanding regional mechanisms or broadening their remit cannot help unless there is a real common purpose underpinning such mechanisms. In too much of the region, neighbourly relations are still seen as a zero sum game — my neighbour's economic or security gain must be my loss. Looking at the lack of economic and physical security of so many of the people of the region, this is patently untrue. But it will take more than just new structures to break the cycle of mistrust and narrow opportunism.

What Central Africans needs first and foremost is a vision, a vision of the mutual benefit that could come from peace and cooperation and of the potential impact of just and far-sighted strategies for the development of the region's vast natural resources. This must form the glue of regional cooperation. It is then that we can look at how the international community can best assist. International input must also be coordinated, across national boundaries and different functions. There is an important leadership role here for the United Nations, especially through the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.

Within Central Africa, it is perhaps in the Great Lakes region that we see most clearly the appalling waste of conflict, the waste of human life and of a beautiful, diverse and resource rich region. Peace agreements have been signed, and step-by-step we are seeing implementation. But I fear that the mentality of conflict — of mistrust, blame and competition — remains. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, the first steps must be to end armed conflict, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish transitional Government, and in Burundi, to strengthen it. But peace-building will depend on wider regional cooperation. The United Kingdom supports the proposal for an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great

Lakes. This can help provide the framework. The will to change course, however, must come from the Governments in the region. If they are listening to their people, it will.

Mr. Sjøberg (Norway): At the outset, let me welcome the participation here today of the Foreign Ministers of the region and the representatives of the various agencies and bodies. Their inputs are highly valued and are important for the Council in the consideration of the situation in the Great Lakes region and beyond, at this opportune time when the prospects for peace are real and at hand.

For at least two decades, seven of the 11 countries of Central Africa have been ravaged by violent conflicts, resulting in untold suffering and loss. As the countries gradually emerge from conflict, it is imperative that focus be placed on peace-building, in close cooperation with the international community. The countries of Central Africa need to embark on a process of development with political, security, social and economic dimensions. External support for the making of agreements must be matched by support for their practical implementation.

The conflicts in Central Africa are interlinked and regional approaches to conflict management thus essential. The efforts made by the States in the region to promote regional cooperation and collective security are encouraging, but more needs to be done. The main responsibility for peace-building rests with the countries themselves, but the international community can assist importantly in this process.

Peace-building requires the deliberate and coordinated use of a broad spectrum of instruments to promote a stable and lasting peace within and between States. Norway promotes a comprehensive approach that includes activities to help promote reconciliation, good governance, democracy and respect for human rights. An essential element in peace-building is also the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Other security-related issues are humanitarian mine action, getting small arms under control and security sector reform.

A further dimension of peace-building to which we attach great importance is social and economic development. This includes finding lasting solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. Infrastructure and key public functions must be rehabilitated or constructed. Peace-building also encompasses support for education, health and productive sector development.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Norway further emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming gender issues in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. The equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making and implementation is essential for success.

We acknowledge and appreciate the comprehensive efforts of the United Nations to make, keep and build peace in the region through various missions, special and personal representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General. Norway will continue to support the process of making the United Nations more efficient and effective in planning and conducting complex peace operations. This means strengthening the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as well as the United Nations Development Programme and other entities with an operative role, while ensuring clear lines of authority and the delineation of roles in order to enhance synergy and avoid duplication of efforts. Hopefully, this will enhance Member States' willingness to provide financial and human resources for these operations.

We strongly encourage close cooperation between the United Nations and the international finance institutions. Several of the countries in the region have large outstanding debts, which in some cases prohibit the full involvement of these institutions. Norway will consider supporting multilateral debt initiatives for these countries in order to facilitate the full engagement in the reconstruction and development efforts of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Norway has developed a strategy for our contribution to coordinated international efforts to promote conflict resolution and peace-building in the Great Lakes region. Although we have allocated substantial resources for this purpose, they are nevertheless limited and should be utilized as effectively as possible.

Norway has supported the inter-Congolese dialogue in the amount of $500,000. We have also allocated 25 million Norwegian kroner to the Trust Fund for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the Great Lakes region set

up by the World Bank in 2002. In addition, our humanitarian assistance and transitional assistance to the region has amounted to Nkr235 million in 2002.

Notwithstanding the recent strides made towards peace in the Great Lakes region and beyond, the deplorable security situations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi are highly alarming. They could very well have negative repercussions on the security and stability of other countries as well. We are worried that the renewed fighting is putting the peace processes at risk. Reports of a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation are deeply disturbing and we must all act together to solidify the gains made on the political level so that these may be translated into real progress on the ground.

Finally, poverty and violent conflict have far-reaching repercussions. We are all, directly or indirectly, affected by their destabilizing consequences. It is essential to help prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts, to pave the way for peace while conflicts are still being fought and to rebuild societies after peace has been restored in order to promote durable peace and sustainable development. Our hope is that, through this debate here today, we have fleshed out these issues in such a way that we can all act together in this fashion.

Mr. Mauriès (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to thank and commend you, Sir, for organizing this debate, which is of key importance to us. The discussion seems to have evolved in a thoroughly desirable manner, including through the statements of ministers of countries of the region and the participation of the President of the Economic and Social Council and representatives of the major agencies concerned. France supports the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union.

I will not review all the conflicts in the region or the endeavours under way in the United Nations. I should simply like to offer some thoughts inspired by the Council's follow-up of these issues and by the statements of the ministers who spoke earlier.

First, cooperation with the States of the region seems to be increasingly necessary. The Council has in fact been able to establish excellent working relations with the States of the region. The best example of this is undoubtedly related to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in connection with which the Council has been able to establish a genuine partnership with signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. That partnership has been gradually enhanced by the Council's regular missions to the field and by meetings here in this Chamber in New York at least once a year.

The relationship of trust established between the Council and the States of the region has enabled it to enjoy direct contact with the reality on the ground and a conduit whereby to send the necessary messages — and sometimes warnings that may prove necessary. Efforts are required on the part of all the countries of the region in order to build on the progress recently achieved in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a progress that — and we should not deceive ourselves — is still fragile.

All the States of the region need to bring the requisite pressure to bear to ensure that armed groups and factions over which they have some influence, in the east of the country, lay down their weapons and to put an end to the massacres that are occurring there.

The process of withdrawal of foreign forces must be completed, because this is a prerequisite for peace to return, finally, to the region. And the States concerned should cooperate fully in implementing the programme of demobilization, repatriation and reintegration of members of armed groups.

Likewise, the parties must comply in full with the Council's resolutions, beginning with the demilitarization of the tormented town of Kisangani. There again, neighbouring States have a role to play in inducing the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) rebels to comply with that obligation.

The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), should be deployed in the east of the country to better observe the situation on the ground and support the withdrawal and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

The Congolese now need to agree on the modalities for political transition and reach a political agreement that will include all the parties.

Finally, mobilization on the part of all will be necessary to put an end to the plundering of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's resources. As the Kassem report has just reminded us, plunder is one of

the driving forces of this conflict, and it is aided and abetted on all sides. It is not acceptable that the resources of that great country continue to be used to inflict greater harm on the Congolese people.

The peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be divorced from the process under way in Burundi. And there again, the Council is encouraging the region in its efforts. The recent summit of the regional initiative made it possible to make some headway towards a cease-fire, and now the last recalcitrant rebel movements must cease their hostilities and negotiate in good faith.

The process in Angola has undergone considerable turmoil this year. But for the first time, the Lusaka protocol is now being applied. The people of Angola must fully seize this historic opportunity to restore stability and prosperity for all in that country that has suffered such ordeals in its history.

The Central African Republic, lastly, is a good example of cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa, where the maintenance of peace and security is concerned. An international observer force is to be deployed there, pursuant to a regional initiative led by President Bongo, to whom France wishes to pay tribute. The heads of State of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) made that decision at the Libreville Summit on 2 October. That force will be playing a stabilizing role in the country and throughout the region. This will be an observer force, not an intervention force, meaning that the primary responsibility for regional stability will lie first and foremost with the parties themselves. They must quickly implement the confidence-building measures that were agreed to at the Libreville Summit. In particular, they should proceed to remove those individuals who represent an obstacle to good neighbourly relations between the Central African Republic and Chad. It is also important for President Deby to go to Bangui in the near future, as he has already stated.

Our Council has built up a genuine partnership with CEMAC where the deployment of this force is concerned. In a presidential statement adopted last Friday, it expressed its political support for the States of CEMAC. It encouraged countries outside of the continent to provide logistical or financial contributions. Our Council also laid the foundations of a sound partnership between the force and the United Nations presence on the ground. A liaison with the United Nations Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and General Cissé is planned, and Gabon, the lead country, will be reporting to the Security Council.

Above and beyond the monitoring of these crises, the commitment of the Council and its partners in the region, the experience that we have acquired in Central Africa teaches us that security questions are not the only ones that have to be taken into account in arriving at a final settlement. The success of peace processes depends, first and foremost, on the efforts of the parties themselves. But any peace process needs to be given the financial means required for its success.

In the course of the missions that it has conducted in the Great Lakes region, the Council has engaged in fruitful dialogue with the World Bank and with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). And we are glad to observe a growing level of involvement of international financial institutions and development agencies in peace-building processes in the region, as attested by the recent decisions made on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

Alongside the emergency efforts of the World Bank and the IMF, a return to long-term stability in the region will probably require, as others have already noted, the convening of an international conference for peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region. Such a conference would involve the parties, the States of the region and members of the international community in the identification of steps to be taken and the mobilization of the means required to implement them. Such a conference would make it possible to address, in an all-encompassing fashion, the various aspects of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The time has come to think about the modalities of and arrangements for such a conference. Active engagement on the part of all concerned will be needed if it is to be a success.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Cameroon.

Cameroon fully associates itself with the statement made this morning by His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Congo, on behalf of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). I will, therefore, be brief, particularly since I

am the last speaker on the list and I am eager to resume my presidential functions.

Heeding the appeal of the Security Council, Central Africa has come before the Council for give and take, for synergy for the restoration and maintenance of peace through development and conflict prevention, management and settlement. Central Africa has come before the Security Council to say what it is, to voice its faith in cooperation with the United Nations and the Security Council in particular and to state its expectations.

Central Africa has come to tell us what it is: a region racked by conflict to be sure; but also, first and foremost, a region organizing itself in order to develop in peace and stability. Central Africa is at the heart of Africa. It is a strategic geopolitical grouping with enormous natural resources — mining, agricultural and water: enormous resources give rise to greed, which is not always good for the subregion.

Central Africa gives the impression that it does not know how to live from its wealth, and that it is an area where development is thwarted because of so many conflicts. That point was made by all previous speakers. Seven of the 11 ECCAS countries are experiencing or just beginning to emerge from particularly devastating conflicts.

There has been so much loss of human life, and so much communication and production infrastructure destroyed. What a waste for that unique biodiversity that is so useful for the preservation and the balance of the world's ecosystem.

Yes, Central Africa is a region racked by conflict. But that situation is not inevitable. Even if it were, Central Africa would reject that inevitability. It would reject it because it has said no to war and no to conflict. Central Africa would reject that inevitability because it ultimately wants to live on its resources in peace and stability. That is the second feature of Central Africa: it is a region organized for peace and development.

Hence the revitalization of ECCAS. Hence also the establishment of institutions that promote peace: the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, bolstered by the Central African Early Warning System, the Central African Multinational Force and the Defence and Security Commission. Central Africa, which has come before the Security Council, is therefore a partner that can meet the requirements of Article 52 and Article 53 of the Charter, which promote conflict settlement at the regional level. The point now is to strengthen the structures that have been established and to encourage joint action with the United Nations.

Having told the Council what it is, Central Africa takes the opportunity of this discussion — and this is the second point of my statement — to profess its faith in cooperation with the United Nations and earnestly to appeal for cooperation with the entire United Nations system. How could it be otherwise?

The tasks of development and peace require enormous resources and action by many actors; hence the need for coordination between the Security Council and the subregional organizations. How could it be otherwise when, as the Secretary-General has said, the maintenance of peace has assumed a regional dimension?

> "It is only natural that African States are expected to play a leading role in their own back yards, and in many instances they have risen bravely to the challenge. ...
>
> "What is not natural, or indeed fair, is to expect Africans to carry out these tasks without help." (*S/PV.4081, p. 3*)

That is what the Secretary-General stated to the Council on 15 December 1999.

The Millennium Declaration becomes so relevant: there, our heads of State or Government committed themselves, inter alia, to sustaining regional and subregional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability. Based on that Declaration, and confident in the solemn commitments undertaken by those heads of State or Government, Central Africa wishes to state its expectations. That is the third and final point of my statement. The heads of State or Government spoke at the Millennium Summit, and they spoke well. Now is the time to act. At the 13 September 2002 meeting between President Bush and Central African heads of State in New York, the President of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, outlined areas for international cooperation to maintain peace and security in our subregion.

For the sake of clarity and conciseness, I will cluster them into two areas. The first area of cooperation is capacity-building in the subregion —

through troop-training, exchanges of personnel and arrangements for logistic partnerships and increased access to and capacity to rapidly deploy stocks — through the establishment of cooperation with the other African subregional bodies. I wish to be clear that Central Africa is the only region whose members belong to several groupings, which shows how central its position is.

Finally, thanks to the operationalization of COPAX, the Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC) and the Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC), the Council — through its unanimous support for the deployment of an international observer force on the Chad border with the Central African Republic — has charted a course for our efforts.

My second point relates to support for the peace agreements. In all regions of the world — and Cameroon made this very point in this Chamber on 15 December 1999 — the signing of a peace agreement is always accompanied by funding to help resolve pending issues. We all know that when war comes calling, peace and development leave by the back door. The many conflicts besetting Central Africa have torn asunder the social and economic fabric of the subregion. The need for demobilization, demilitarization, reconstruction and reintegration, as advocated by the United Nations in similar situations, becomes very important here. Any final restoration of peace to the region is largely dependent on this.

In this respect, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme proposed by the World Bank should therefore be welcomed. Its prompt implementation would enable the countries of Central Africa to rebuild their economies and to make up for lost time. All of this requires a visible physical presence of the United Nations in Central Africa.

That is why we believe that the United Nations should build its strategy around an assessment of the situation that is based not on the view from First Avenue but on local perspectives — right there, on the ground, in Central Africa. Hence the importance and the urgency of dispatching an inter-agency mission to the field.

I listened very carefully to the statement made by the representative of Singapore. His statement makes even more relevant the proposal made by Cameroon in the Council in December 1999 and in January 2002 to establish in the Secretariat a structure to follow up on African issues. In this respect, our Organization could make use of the very successful experiences of the World Bank.

Central Africa would like to take advantage of its enormous resources in conditions of peace and stability. It would like to be able to play its role as a linchpin and a pillar for African integration, and it is banking in this respect on the cooperation and the strong, resolute and concrete support of the international community and in particular of the United Nations system.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Members of the Council will recall that during our consultations, and as the background note states that was circulated to members before this meeting, it had been agreed that today's discussion would conclude with a presidential statement. A draft statement incorporating the views and observations made by members during our discussions will be communicated to them this evening for their comments.

Meanwhile, it seems to me appropriate — given the presence here of other Members of the Organization and in particular of Ministers from Central Africa and of representatives of international agencies, who have honoured us with their presence today — to draw some preliminary conclusions from today's meeting.

The objective of our meeting, as members will recall, was to study ways and means to strengthen the very creative partnerships between the United Nations system and Central Africa, in the perspective of the Economic Community of Central African States.

Our discussions have identified several causes of the conflicts that have gripped the region for more than two decades now. All speakers referred to the indissociable link between endemic poverty and the emergence and continuation of conflicts in Central Africa. Our meeting has confirmed the fact that improvements are being seen in all the major conflicts in the subregion, which stems from a more resolute political commitment on the part of the leaders of Central Africa and of the other countries concerned. This new situation requires peace-building measures such as demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and reconstruction. All of these steps require major

funding, which can be mobilized only with the support of the United Nations system and the entire donor community.

All speakers stated how much they appreciated the renewed commitment of the World Bank and of the United Nations Development Programme to assist, in the short, medium and long term, post-conflict operations in Central Africa.

The Council has heard the unanimous appeal of the States of Central Africa for decisive support on the part of the United Nations for the efforts of the subregion in the area of the maintenance of peace and security, and they stressed the importance in this respect of operationalizing the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa.

Speakers welcomed the recent initiative of the States of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa advocating the establishment of an international observer and security force in order to defuse the situation between the Central African Republic and Chad. The States of Central Africa hope that the commitments announced today will be effectively followed up and strengthened. The wish was expressed to have specific follow-up of this discussion.

The Council stressed the importance of synergy in the efforts made, in order to harmonize actions on the ground — hence the need for a general coordinator of the United Nations system for Central Africa garnered considerable support. The meeting called on the Secretary-General to prepare a detailed report on the general situation in Central Africa that would take into account the analyses and conclusions of an inter-agency assessment mission dispatched to the country as well as the innovative ideas mentioned during today's debate.

Finally, I wish to note and to welcome the great enthusiasm and the great level of participation in this public meeting on strengthening partnership between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security.

I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to today's debate. Our discussion has clearly demonstrated that the Security Council and the Members of the United Nations remain resolute in their support of the peoples of the United Nations in Central Africa.

That is very encouraging for the countries of our region, which, through their representatives, have expressed — as one of them put it earlier — great expectations. Our debate has shown that we are all resolved to act, and to act promptly.

I call upon the Secretariat to begin work so that results might emerge in the coming months.

There are no further speakers on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the current stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.